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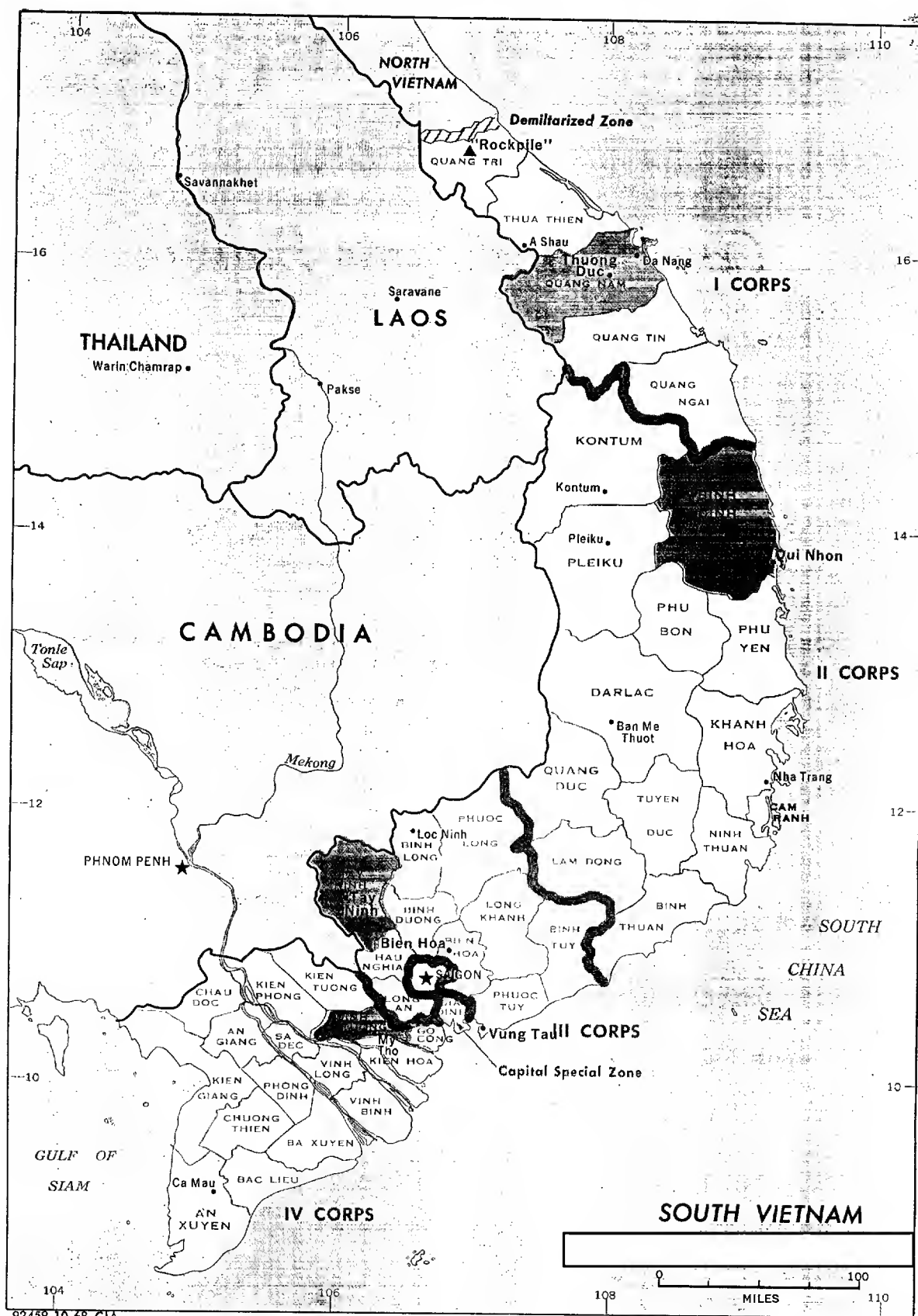
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[Vietnam:

South Vietnam: Ground action over the weekend continued to be restricted to minor infantry clashes and scattered enemy rocket and mortar attacks.

In I Corps, the Communists employed 130-mm. artillery fire against US Marines operating some nine kilometers north of the "Rockpile," near the DMZ. In Quang Nam Province, the enemy mortared US Marine positions near the Thuong Duc Special Forces camp.

Enemy forces in III Corps made at least 13 mortar and rocket attacks during the past 48 hours. These included a brief mortar attack against the large US installation near Bien Hoa city and a rocket attack against Vung Tau some hours before President Thieu met there with his corps commanders and some province chiefs. None of these officials was killed, although six other persons were.

In the most sustained action of the period, US forces in the delta province of Dinh Tuong killed 59 enemy troops at a cost of five killed and 32 wounded during a two-day battle there.

Although the forces involved were minor, a Communist attack on a hamlet some five miles northwest of Qui Nhon city in Binh Dinh Province probably had significant political impact in neighboring villages. The hamlet was defended only by one Popular Forces platoon and a local self-defense force. The hamlet chief, his assistant, and 16 members of the civilian self-defense force were killed.

* * * *

The Viet Cong may have achieved some political gains in their mid-September foray against Tay Ninh city, despite its limited military effectiveness.]

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Those enemy forces which lingered in and around the city from 10 to 13 September apparently were more intent on backing up Communist propaganda than on establishing contact with government forces. Their appearance in the city area helped support Viet Cong claims that they retain the initiative locally and that the government cannot provide security against them.

At least some local reaction to the fighting was antigovernment, according to a recent report. Residents of a Tay Ninh suburb which had been occupied by the Viet Cong were especially bitter about air strikes against their hamlet after the Viet Cong had left. In a nearby area, Communist forces killed several local government officials and four Revolutionary Development workers in skirmishes and assassinated a hamlet chief, thus making good on their propaganda claims about the government's inability to provide security.

Such actions as these have apparently given greater weight to Communist appeals to the sizable pacifist group among the Cao Dai sect, which includes a majority of the inhabitants of Tay Ninh Province.

* * * *

Communist China - North Vietnam: The Chinese Communists have acknowledged publicly, for the first time, that the North Vietnamese are engaged in negotiating with the United States. A Chinese press release on 19 October was confined primarily to quotes from the Western press, but Peking's hostility to the Paris talks was clear. The item disparaged the press reports and charged that President Johnson was preparing to "dish out a big plot and fraud of 'halting all bombings'."

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Czechoslovakia-USSR: Prague's formal acquiescence in an agreement that will mean a substantial Soviet troop presence reportedly has resulted in growing discord among top Czechoslovak officials.

Dubcek appears resigned to the agreement, but both President Svoboda and presidium member Mlynar are said to be vehemently opposed to it. Premier Cernik, who defended the agreement before the ratification session of the National Assembly, is reliably reported to be "working well" with the Soviets and to be seeking to replace Dubcek as party first secretary. Slovak party leader Husak, who also appears to have Moscow's favor, supported the treaty in a speech on 19 October, adding that even now anti-socialist forces are slowing the process toward normalization.

A polarization also appears to be taking place in lower party ranks. A 20-member faction of "progressive" dissidents allegedly is forming within the central committee. Conservative elements also reportedly have established the nucleus of an organization to challenge Dubcek.

The pro-Dubcek Prague city party organization claims that the conservatives have called for legal proceedings against officials of the mass media, among others, for their activities during and immediately after the invasion. This report may have contributed to rumors that the hardliners have drawn up a blacklist of liberals and plan to stage show trials once they have sufficient power.

The Soviet press has given heavy play to the status-of-forces agreement, and the way now appears to be open for "spontaneous" public and party approval of both this document and Soviet policy in general. This could include endorsement by the full central committee, a meeting of which, the US Embassy in Moscow reports, has been rumored off and on during recent weeks.

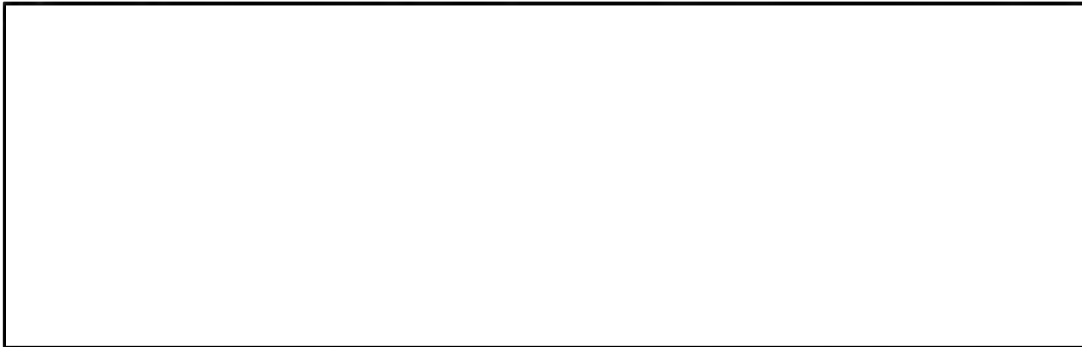
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[Lebanon: President Hilu has succeeded in forming a compromise cabinet and has temporarily solved the domestic political crisis.

President Hilu on 20 October withdrew his resignation after he obtained the agreement of the rival Chamounist and Shihabist parliamentary blocs on the new four-man cabinet. Hilu, who had been trying to get approval of a cabinet since 10 October, had submitted his resignation on 19 October, charging that the failure to form a viable cabinet had made it impossible for him to govern.



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The creation of the new cabinet, headed by ex-prime minister Yafi, solves the immediate problem. The basic rivalry between the country's two evenly matched political blocs will continue, however, and could produce another crisis on 22 October when parliament elects a new speaker. The possibility of a military coup still cannot be ruled out.



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NOTE

Okinawa: Extreme leftist elements may be increasing their influence in the opposition coalition organized to unseat the ruling conservative party in the elections on 10 November. A new platform published by the coalition calls for an "immediate, unconditional, and complete reversion" of Okinawa to Japan, instead of the previous demand for reversion by 1970. The coalition also now calls for opposition to nuclear submarine visits and promises to "democratize" the police. The leftist coalition has at least an even chance to oust the conservatives from control of the executive branch and the legislature in November. [REDACTED]

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